



The Showers



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Chapter 1 by Ryen Weaver

Every area in all parts of the world has those area-specific urban legends that just refuse to die. Whether the stories are about a haunted asylum on the outskirts of the city, a creature that lives in the nearby woods, or a ghost that haunts a lonely stretch of road outside of town, there is always a common thread within the tales; no one has ever been to these places, seen the creatures, or witnessed any hauntings with their own eyes.

There are members of every generation who will proclaim that they "know someone whose brother's best friend's sister went to that haunted house with thirteen floors that used real blood and snakes and spiders and is so scary that no one has ever made it all the way through." Those same people will swear by these stories without ever being able to provide a shred of evidence or a name of someone who could provide proof of the claims simply because "everyone around here knows that it's a true story". The storytellers eventually pass the tales onto their children, who modify them just enough to keep up with changing times, and the cycle continues.

I'm as skeptical as anyone when it comes to these stories, seeing as I was like a junkie when I

was younger, constantly searching for more terrifying stories about whatever area of the country I was living in at the time. I walked away with tales about haunted pizza parlors in New York, my "cousin's" encounter with the Jersey Devil, or how my "grandfather" encountered a feral human. I even broke the one rule with these stories by putting myself in them. This book got, in hindsight, because I had to make sure that I always told them the same way. Surprisingly, no one ever called my bluff.

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I like to think that I have had some wonderful contributions to various urban legends around the Midwest and northeastern states; I moved around a lot. There was always a surge of joy whenever I would wander the halls at school and hear one of my classmates retelling my stories to another one of their friends, adding little bits here and there like a massive game of telephone. I knew, of course, that the stories were complete fiction, but I stood my ground whenever someone asked me about them; I would even manage to act a little bit, speaking with a shaky voice or looking scared when I would recount a situation that I supposedly experienced myself.

I suppose this aspect of my childhood has led to my current predicament which I will recount, in full, for the internet to take from it what they will. I have laid this little introduction out as sort of a disclaimer, aimed particularly at those who will call my story into question. I have been like the boy who cried wolf for years, but I assure you with every ounce of honesty and integrity that I have that this time, the wolf is real.

From my introduction, it is probably apparent that I moved around the country quite a bit in my middle and high school years. Neither of my parents had anything to do with any branch of the armed forces; they simply didn't tend to hang around any given place for too long. I suppose it had some sort of effect on me, but I wasn't hurt by it or anything of the sort. Growing up, I was a complete ham. I made friends very easily, was often the class clown, and because of that, was often disliked by my teachers. Again, this was never an issue, as I was usually in another state by the time the next semester rolled around.

My friendships were often fleeting, as were any positive relationships that I ever had with my teachers. Because of the events that followed, my memory of one teacher in particular is probably slightly skewed, but I will attempt to give the least biased version of our friendship that I can.

Mr. Mays was one of my social studies teachers in the early years of my high school experience. Being older now, I can understand how horrible children are to deal with around that age, and I

respect him to no ends for the way that he was able to connect with his students. He seemed like one of us; he talked like us. I would often listen to cool music, and sometimes, he would give a passionate lecture about Native American history. He was the epitome of cool to a freshman in high school.

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My memories of Mr. Mays mostly stem from the way that he really got into anything that he was doing. The instance that is still very vivid in my mind was, of course, around Halloween of my sophomore year. Mr. Mays had the typical teacher decorations around the classroom, smiling jack-o-lanterns and black cat cartoons, typical and boring in the minds of egotistic high-school students. However, on the 31st of October, when most other teachers were rolling their eyes at the fact that teenagers still took dressing up in costumes on Halloween seriously, Mr. Mays took the whole "cool teacher" thing to a new level.

We walked into the classroom and were surprised to find the blinds drawn, sheets over the smaller windows, candles lighting the room, and a single, frowning jack-o-lantern sitting on a stool in front of the desks. Mr. Mays sat at his desk, just watching the students come into class and take their seats. He didn't have to ask anyone to be quiet because the moment everyone walked into the room, they were either too excited to care about petty conversations, or too confused to bother with them. The students took their seats as Mr. Mays began his lecture. He spoke quietly to set the mood, and took a seat on a chair, right next to the jack-o-lantern in the center of the room.

"Today is probably my favorite day of the year, class," he said, in a monotonous voice.

"Halloween is my favorite holiday, and I want to share with you exactly why I love it so much."

One girl raised her hand with a concerned look on her face. "I'm pushing the due date for your papers to next Tuesday," said Mr. Mays, without bothering to look at the girl, who slowly put her hand down, looking around at the other students with a hint of embarrassment. The class erupted in quiet cheers and Mr. Mays waited for the inevitable silence. He began his story immediately after the class had calmed down.

I will attempt to recreate the amazing story that Mr. Mays told the class that day. The way in which he told this story rendered the horror-junkies speechless and the rest of the class terrified. The same girl that had raised her hand to ask about the paper was holding her knees to her chest by the end of it, a look of terror on her face.

The important thing to know was that the story was about the spirit of Halloween, and now and aren't too relevant. I'll try to recreate the story as best as I can, but don't hold me to it. Basically Mr. Mays and his class went to the beach and the country after graduating from college. They went to the beach and the country and set out to sight-see for the entire summer. The group went from the beaches of New Jersey down to the coasts of

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Florida, New Orleans to California and up to Washington. From there, they went to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado and then back home to New York. This concept of the freedom to travel anywhere had the entire class hooked in an instant; Mr. Mays was the coolest teacher ever, in my eyes.

Being adventurous college kids, the group didn't bring a map. There were no time constraints, so they just kind of drove in the general direction that they wanted to go and eventually found a town to stay in or someplace that looked interesting. He told us that after spending a week in Colorado, he and his friends had to travel through miles and miles of corn, plains, and more corn. He assumed that they were in either Nebraska or Kansas when they decided to pool their extra cash and stay in a hotel for a night. They settled into a motel in some town that Mr. Mays could barely remember the name of when one of his friends realized that they were somewhere near his grandfather's farm. He wasn't entirely sure where it was, but being adventurous college kids, they decided to get a quick refund from the motel and try to contact the friend's grandpa.

They were unable to get ahold of the grandpa on the phone, so the group figured it would be fun to just show up. Mr. Mays' friend was adamant that his grandparents would take them in and feed them without a moment of hesitation. So, the group set out with an hour of sunlight, seeking the salvation of a comfortable house to stay in.

In Kansas, or Nebraska, wherever it may have been, there aren't a whole lot of natural markers that could guide lost travelers; any directions given to someone who didn't live around the area basically amounted to "go up a couple of miles to the corn, take a right and go down a dirt road to the other corn; there should be some wheat on your right." So, as is the case in most scary stories, the group got lost. Never wanting to admit defeat, they drove into the night, making wrong turns every five minutes until they found themselves on a wooded road that Mr. May's friend was certain that his grandparents lived off of.

Mr. Mays described the road as basically a dark path to hell. I wasn't entirely sure how true this was, because he got very excited and a bit ridiculous with his explanations of the "trees that

almost tried to grab the car" and "the red light of our low animals looking at them from the darkness." Regardless, the typical "scary story" of the class, everyone was terrified.

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So the group of guys drove on this dark road for about fifteen minutes before they came to a clearing and a small building with lights in it, and what seemed to be a silo. They figured that, at the very least, the people who lived here would be able to help them find where the guy's grandparents lived; the whole idea of "everyone knows everyone in these hick parts of the country," fueled this hope. They pulled the car up near the building, realizing when they were out of the car that it appeared to be like the kind of places where one would store a whole bunch of chickens, not a home. Still, the lights were on, so they figured they would give it a try.

They approached the building as a group, looking in the semi-open sliding door to find a big, empty room. Hanging, fluorescent lights lit the room like it was daytime, and they couldn't see a soul. There were no cars, but one of Mr. Mays' friends was convinced he'd seen someone as they pulled up, so they decided to go inside and see if there was an office or something where someone might still be working. Why else would they have this huge place lit up like that?

There were no doors on the inside of the building; again, it was just a giant, empty hall. So, the group roamed around the property and over towards the silo. As they got closer, they noticed what appeared to be a cellar door. At this point, I remember Mr. Mays telling the entire class to learn from his idiocy. He told us that he hadn't seen many horror movies before that time, and didn't think twice about approaching a creepy cellar door in the middle of a dark, scary, foreign place. He said that approaching that door was one of his biggest regrets.

Mr. Mays let the whole class know that he was going to tell us as much as he deemed appropriate about the experience. He felt that we were mature enough to handle it, but advised anyone that was squeamish to leave class early. Several students quietly gathered their things and walked out the door, a couple of them being stoners who saw this as an opportunity to smoke behind the school before their next class. I didn't even give the announcement a second thought. Like I said, I was and am a sucker for this kind of stuff, and Mr. Mays was telling a story better than anything I had ever conjured up. I wanted to learn from this guy, even though I didn't believe much of the story.

After the class had thinned a bit, Mr. Mays continued with the story. He told the remaining few

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metal sheeting, similar to the roofing on farms. The hallway itself was crooked and the ceilings constantly lowered and rose, like a tunnel that was hastily dug and then never touched up. There were sections where the boys had to almost crouch in order to pass.

The worst part, Mr. Mays told us, was that the light bulbs continuously flickered, sometimes acting like a strobe light and making it very difficult to move through the winding and unstable hallways. In hindsight, he was certain that his mind was playing tricks on him, but he remembered seeing flashes of things that couldn't be there. He said that when you are that focused on something, or if you are that nervous, your mind can do that to you; it can simply revolt, showing you things or people that aren't there. He continued to describe the hallway, and I was on the edge of my seat. The halls were windy and seemed to go on forever; Mr. Mays guessed that they were somewhere under the creepy forest they had driven through when they found a door, but he couldn't be sure.

He said that they came upon a door after walking for what felt like a mile. It was simple and wooden, but it looked like it belonged outside of a suburban home. It had a nice design, seemed to be freshly painted red, and had a very nice knob and knocker on it. It was a door that belongs at the entrance to a nice house, not one that would be sitting in a dirt tunnel in the middle of nowhere. His friend walked towards the door, moving carefully because of the flashing light bulb and increasingly uncertainty about the stability of the surrounding "walls". He turned to the group, the rest of which were nervous at the very least, and attempted to lighten the mood with a laugh before he said, "I should probably knock first."

Mr. Mays' friend grabbed the steel knocker and hit it against the door several times, mockingly, but quietly uttering, "Is anyone home?" The group waited about thirty seconds before their tension broke. The guy next to the door shrugged his shoulders and went to walk back to his friends, but as he did, the light bulb between them surged and exploded. The boys shielded their eyes and looked back to their lone friend by the door. As he lowered his hands, one of the metal sheets of the makeshift roof dropped. The edge of the sheet fell directly on the boy's forehead, slicing it open, and sending a wave of blood down his face. The impact apparently knocked him

out, and he fell back against the door, knocking it open in the process.

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The entirety of the group rushed to the door, their friend barely noticing the seemingly pitch black room. He stepped forward, the first to make it to his friend's side. He lifted the boy's head, took off his jacket and putting it over his forehead to attempt to stop the bleeding. Once the group had calmed down, Mr.

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Mays noticed that the arm that had been bracing his friend's head was soaking wet. He was confused about this, and was attempting to sort it out when one of his friends started talking. He said something along the lines of "the lights; we have to go," when Mr. Mays took notice.

"You know when you turn off a light," he told the class, "and everything is almost pitch-black, except the light of the bulb dying out or cooling down? It was like that, but there were so many of them. At least twenty light bulbs had lit the room seconds ago, and now only looked like little stars in the darkness. That was definitely terrifying, but that wasn't the scariest thing."

There was still a very dim light coming from the hallway behind them, and though it was weak, it lit the room up just enough to see the shape of tens of people standing less than ten feet in front of them. Mr. Mays' friend went to say something else as one of the bulbs to their right flickered to life.

Let me interrupt at this point and say that Mr. Mays was a generally playful guy. He had that tone of voice that makes you want to respond. Basically, he could say "let's go jump off of a cliff, guys," and you would want to respond with "alright Mr. Mays, show us the way!" That is a ridiculous statement, but it gets the point across. He was a charismatic guy. The whole story up to this point had been told like a campfire story. He had the voice inflections of someone attempting to be mysterious and scary, which worked, but was noticeable. At this point in his tale, I recall that changing completely. He was no longer attempting to spook anyone; I could tell that this section was difficult for him. Either he was a very good actor, or it was really a terrifying memory for him to relive.

He told us that the light bulb came to life, and illuminated the group of people in front of him. In the dim light, he could see children, at least twenty of them in just the visible light. They were all dressed in nightgowns that looked to be tattered and torn, stained dark with something. Their hair was long; every single one of them looked like they had not had a haircut since birth. Some of the children were almost completely obscured by the length of it; every single one of them didn't appear to have seen a shower or nice bath in their entire life.

Mr. Mays told us that the most terrifying part of the whole thing was that none of the children were moving. They were all staring at him, visible from the faint light reflecting off of their eyes. For several seconds, when they heard what sounded like the sound of a dog crying, multiplied by ten. This spurred the group to life, just as the

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children began to step forward. His friends grabbed the injured one and lifted him out of the room and into the hallway in an instant. Mr. Mays took another second to move, and had difficulty finding his bearings. He reached to his left in an attempt to find a wall to lean against, and ended up finding a handle, then pulled hard, never losing his vision on the children.

He bolted for the door right as he noticed what he had grabbed on to. A showerhead protruded from a cement wall, reaching maybe a foot into the room. There was something leaking from it, but it was too dim to tell what it was. He realized that it had been leaking onto him, but he didn't care. There were now children stammering towards him as an animal cried in the distance and his friend was seriously injured. As he left the room, he made a point to emphasize that he could make out several more shower heads on the wall near the single, dim light bulb.

"This is why I call them 'The Showers,'" Mr. Mays told the class. I was transfixed, sitting as far forward as my desk would allow, bracing for more.

"I slammed the red door behind me," he said, "and ran through that hallway faster than I have ever run before or since. I made it back to the car, and we drove out of there like a bat out of hell." (A couple of students snickered at his use of the word "hell".) "So, when you're out trick r' treating tonight, make sure that you know exactly where you are headed, and don't go out to any abandoned farmhouses. I mean, there aren't many around here, but you're all smart kids, except Jerry." The class laughed and the mood lightened as the bell rang for passing period.

Mr. Mays turned the light on and thanked everyone for listening, reminded them about the paper due next week, and told us to have a safe and Happy Halloween. Students all around me were abuzz with theories about the story they had just heard.

"I bet it was some sort of crazy Nazi hideout," said one girl.

"I think they were all ghost babies that were killed by a dog," said another.

I couldn't theorize in the slightest; I was still caught up in the moment. The way that Mr. Mays had told that story and the detail that he included in it left me feeling like we didn't get the whole story.

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A couple days later, I stayed in the room for a while. I was still thinking about what happened to his friend. He said that it was honestly the best story he had ever heard.

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whispered this part), "Probably due to some of the drugs they were on at the time." Mr. Mays winked at me as if to say, "don't tell anyone about the drugs bit, kid," and I smiled and left.

I lived in that town for another couple months and then was rapidly moved halfway across the country to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I twisted the story around and told it around campfires as I got older, and it was always a hit, but I always changed the ending, letting the friend die of blood loss or from being dragged away by the children.

It wasn't until college that I got a chance to talk to Mr. Mays again.

I went to college in northern New York, not for any reasons associated with this story. College was a fun time for me; I continued being the same ham that I had always been. It wasn't until sometime around my junior year that I ran into Mr. Mays at a bar that I frequented.

Initially, I couldn't be sure that the person I saw laying with his head buried in his arm at the bar was Mr. Mays. The only trait that grabbed my attention was a sweater that he used to wear on his birthday during class. The shirt simply read: "I'm the birthday boy!"

I told my group of friends to grab a table and that I would join them in a second, then walked over to the man at the bar. "Mr. Mays?" I said, and the man looked up.

The man took a second too look at my face before he smiled, put a hand on my shoulder, and said, "Hey there, son! How have you been?" I could smell some strong whiskey on his breath, and his cheeks were flushed. The look in his eyes told me that he was three sheets to the wind and probably had no idea who I was.

"Mr. Mays, it's Jack. I was a student of yours for a couple semesters about six or so years ago." His face changed a bit, and a genuine look of recognition set in.

He took a calmer tone, smiled, and said, "How've you been, Jack?"

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It took me a while to realize that I was an adult that was having a conversation with another adult.

Every time I had spoken to Mr. Mays previously, I had been in the student/teacher relationship; but now, I was just a guy having a drink with a friend at the bar.

My friends eventually left, and I continued to drink with Mr. Mays. He told me all about his divorce and his kids, things that I never would have asked or cared about previously. But now, I cared; he was a real person to me, not just an idol anymore. This was a guy who had real problems, not the infallible teacher that I once thought he was.

It had been several hours before I even brought up his story about "The Showers". I told him all about my history with urban legends and scary stories, and he just laughed. When I mentioned the story that he had told us years ago, he almost seemed uncomfortable. He finished his whiskey, signaled for another, and then turned to me and got very serious.

"Listen Jack, I don't know why I kept telling that story, year after year." His words were slurred, or my hearing was messed up; we were both sufficiently blitzed at this point. "That was what my therapist told me to do when I was younger. I had to tell people it, to come to grips with it, or some shit." He took a big swig of his drink.

"Wait, your therapist?" I said.

Mr. Mays laughed heartily and looked at me. "Of course, Jack. You think that something like that wouldn't fuck a person up?"

I was confused, but smiled nonetheless. Things had just gotten very strange.

"But, I mean, you said you were all on drugs or something, right? No one was too terribly hurt. You were all okay, right?"

He got almost cartoonish with his sadness in the next several seconds. "Of course we didn't, Jack. Why do you think I'm here right now?"

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I was puzzled, quickly filled with a thousand questions that I wanted to ask him, but I let him carry on.

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"Tim fuckin', he didn't make it, Jack," he laughed; his laugh turned suddenly to tears. "Fucking took him, they did. I don't even know. Cops told us we were just drunk, that he wandered off and got taken by the wildlife. He didn't know. He didn't see it, Jack."

I was absolutely stone-faced at this point. Mr. Mays was carrying along like I knew the actual story, but I didn't. His friend disappeared. I didn't know.

"I wish they'd have found the body, though. Then we could have shown them," he sighed. "That's a bad place, Jack. I don't know anything else to say. It's a bad place."

He carried on for a couple minutes more about his friend and the fun that they had before they went on that trip, and I let him talk. It was only a few minutes later that his phone rang.

"Hello, sweetheart," he whispered into the phone. "I'll be out in a second. I l-" he gagged. "-ove you, baby." The person on the other end hung up the phone, and Mr. Mays got up to leave.

"It's been nice seeing you, Jackie. You've gotta good head on your shoulders, boy. Make sure you use it." He began to walk out of the bar.

"Mr. Mays!" I yelled after him.

"Yeah, Jack?" he turned back towards me.

"Where'd you say all that showers business took place?"

"Where? Hell, didn't I mention it? It's somewhere outside Broken Bow, Nebraska. Fucking Hell on Earth, if you ask me."

Mr. Mays walked out of the bar after waving to me, running into the wall before eventually finding the door.

That was the last time I would see him. I'd never be able to tell him the impact that he had on my life, or rather, the impact that his story had on me. He'd never know about the trip we took after

graduation, almost mimicking the one he and his friends had made. He would never know that the things he saw at that place were real. About a month later, his liver failed on him. It's alright though, he got to die in a hospital room. He got to die around people that cared about him and that's not like that.

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I experienced that place too, several years later. That is where my story turns. The following is the story of how I came to find "The Showers," and why I will never, ever go anywhere near Nebraska ever again. I'll finish this story when I'm sober. The memory is clear enough.

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